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The Strategies of Revealing How Identities Have Become Problematized in Latin America, Using the Selected Works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez

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The Strategies of Revealing How Identities Have Become Problematized in Latin America, Using the Selected Works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

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INTRODUCTION

> "He knew what he knew: that the real world was full of magic, so magical worlds could easily be real."
> (Salman Rushdie, Haroun and the Sea of Stories, 1990)

My first exposure to the wonderful, alternate realities of magic realism came early in my junior year of college, through Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude. Over the following year and a half I would re-encounter magic realism through the works of Salman Rushdie and Simone Schwartz-Bart, but there was always something distinct about Garcia Marquez which eventually led me back to him. Certainly it was the prose and the fantastic situations which initially garnered my attention, but within this beauty was also an urgency, an immediacy, which was elusive. It was easy to enjoy magic realism at face value, but there was undoubtedly something beyond that which was compelling. There was something about the narration, something unsettling in its objective description of what was real and unreal and its refusal to draw any distinctions between the two.

In that discomfort were planted the first seeds of this project, but my second period of inspiration didn't come until some time later. In a class on Contemporary Literature we studied a short story by Gabriel Garcia

Marquez--"The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World"--which our texts had categorized under the label "Metafiction." This surprised me in a nominal way, because I couldn't tell the difference between this story and the others I had read by Garcia Marquez which had always been categorized under "Magic Realism." For the most part, I dismissed this as a simple problem of nomenclature, but it interested me enough to see what the two had in common, and how they stood apart from one another. It was not until much later, late in the process of writing my thesis, that I discovered the two terms could hardly be separated in Latin American literature.

One of the most difficult, though essential, obstacles I needed to hurdle in order to better understand the fiction of Garcia Marquez was in seeing magic realism and metafiction as two strategies which were not separate. Metafiction is a tool which erects artifices and layers of meaning in order to prompt questions in the mind of the reader concerning the relationship between a variety of realities. In a similar vein, magic realism juxtaposes the fabulous with the ordinary in order to question one's concept of reality. In this sense, the two cannot be separated: magic realism is a strategy authors like Garcia Marquez use to accomplish something which is metafictional.

What makes magic realism special and such a powerful, metafictional tool is that it overwhelms the reader by

drawing him or her in without resolving for the reader the obvious conflict of the coexistence of uncooperative realities. Since its colonization centuries ago, Latin America has been a site of ideological conflict which is a product of the duality in the lives of these people, caused by the imposition of Western values and modes of production upon indigenous ones. In fact, "duality" is a misleading term for there could be any number of realities in conflict at any given time and location. As I will explain in further detail later, these two realities are in many ways incapable of absorbing one another. Consequently the identities of the Latin American peoples have become problematized because their reality and sense of identity has been threatened by another which stakes its claim as being the only acceptable reality. As a metafictional tool, magic realism allows Garcia Marquez to illustrate the "truth" that what is real is a matter of perspective, and that one reality can make no claim of having any greater degree of validity than another.

In order to investigate the way in which Garcia Marquez uses magic realism to comment on the politics of the construction of identities in Latin America, I have divided my thesis into three major portions, which are followed by a short conclusion. In the first chapter I intend to explore the person of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, including his influences, convictions and political activities. This

information is integral to an understanding of Garcia Marquez as a political figure whose life has been structured around awakening the awareness of the world to how identity has been problematized in Latin America. Although I felt it necessary for the sake of order to separate this information from the following two chapters, I should emphasize that in no way can this information be seen as being distinct from the work itself. In essence, this first chapter establishes a necessary context for the analysis I intend to conduct on Garcia Marquez's literature in the following two chapters.

This chapter will be followed by a second and third chapter, both of which will analyze the works of Garcia Marquez I have selected, for magic realism and its inherent metafictional implications. The works I have chosen are the two short stories "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" and "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World," and the novel Love in the Time of Cholera. I have chosen these works rather than the other fictional works of Garcia Marquez because little critical work focusing on these texts has been published--particularly concerning the novel. In addition, the work that has been published on these texts has never seemed to draw an explicit connection between the inseparability of metafiction and magic realism in the author's works. Within these chapters I illuminate avenues of thought alternate to the ones I have chosen to travel along are illuminated. In my conclusion, I will gesture

toward directions from which further study on this subject could potentially take off. I only hope that my work does justice to the complexity of my topic, and raises enough interest in my readers to spur further exploration of Garcia Marquez's works and the politics of identity creation in Latin America.

CHAPTER 1: GARCIA MARQUEZ AND HIS ROLE AS A LATIN AMERICAN AUTHOR

Prior to the second half of the twentieth century, Latin American literature had sadly never attained the credibility it deserved among international circles of contemporary literature. Whereas in Europe the novel has developed steadily since its inception, the process was markedly slower in Hispanic America, where the Spanish and Portuguese languages had been imposed in the sixteenth century (Carpentier 99). For a number of centuries the novel developed in Latin America, but its firm entrenchment in regional culture and subject matter inhibited its growth from stretching beyond the culture (104). However, during the 1960's the importance of artists like Borges, Neruda and Octavio Paz was more and more coming to be recognized. Similarly, the proliferation of Carlos Fuentes and Mario Vargas Llosa's translations had led to the international public seeing "Latin American letters as a potent force in contemporary literature" (Gale Research Matuz 133).

This burgeoning international recognition for the literature of Latin America came to be known as "El Boom," its impact being first felt in the 1960's (Gale Research Marowski 142). It would be erroneous to understand this era as one synonymous with the sudden birth of the Latin American novel. To be more accurate, it was rather the time

when "writers broke with sterile provincialism and folklorism, and when they wrote on a universal level they were accepted universally (Carpentier 110). In an interview, Alejo Carpentier--one of the initial writers associated with the "boom"--explains why this categorization is misleading:

> . . . the word 'boom' is totally misleading in that it implies the definition of a movement which isn't a movement at all because it has no central axis. It has no spine, no vertebral column. It was merely the appearance (in different parts of Latin America simultaneously) of a generation of writers between thirty-five and sixty who used new techniques and themes in their novels. (110)

Despite his wariness of this categorization, Carpentier does agree that these authors "deserve our admiration" for what he calls the "deprovincialization of Latin American literature" (110). Among this generation of authors who would implement "their style, their themes, and their way of approaching problems" to push Latin American literature into the international spotlight--and arguably its most celebrated member--was Gabriel Garcia Marquez (110).

In 1967, Gabriel Garcia Marquez wrote the novel which came to be memorialized as the definitive work catapulting the literary works of this culture previously known only for its under-developed cultures--at least by common Western standards--and perpetual political strife, into the international eye. The novel, Cien anos de soledad, was originally published in Buenos Aires, sold eight thousand copies in its first week (Bell-Villada 4), and was described

by Pablo Neruda as "the greatest revelation in the Spanish language since the Don Quixote of Cervantes" (Gale Research Matuz 133). Probably no other author would come to be more associated with this explosion of Latin American culture into the narrow cannons of Western literature than Garcia Marquez.

Before one jumps haphazardly into the works of Garcia Marquez, it is imperative--particularly because of the unique environment which has spawned his writings--that one first investigates the forces which have shaped the author. This conviction that the context from which the Latin American author writes in can in no way be separated from the content of his or her writing finds support in the thoughts of Alejo Carpentier, who remarked that

> . . . while it is true that in some European countries--let's say in England or Scandinavia--literature can exist outside the political context, in Latin America this is absolutely impossible. For better or worse, in tragedy or in great moments of triumph and victory, our lives are so closely linked to politics that we cannot pluck someone out of his environment with tweezers, put him on the table and say: 'I'm going to study this person.' Individuals must be studied in relation to their group, as a function of the praxis and attitudes of the social context. (104)

Because the "political" comes to cover virtually every aspect of the Latin American author's life, one must make a wide sweep over the most predominant influences. While the violence and social unrest so characteristic of Latin American life are integral to my investigation, the author's

more subtle and "quiet" roots in local and regional folk culture are just as critical, as I will explain.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez was born in the unpaved Colombian town of Aracataca on March 6, 1927. It was here that he lived the first eight years of his life in the care of his maternal grandparents. His grandmother, Tranquilina Iguaran, would play a particularly important role in the shaping of his life as an author (Gale Research Stine 146). First, Tranquilina provided young Gabriel with an abundance of subject matter for his stories. For instance, Tranquilina Iguaran and Colonel Nicolas Marquez had disapproved of their daughter's romantic interest, and they had done their best to frustrate their courtship by sending Luisa off to stay with relatives for the time being. Gabriel Eligio was not to be so easily dissuaded, however, and Luisa was frequently treated to his regular messages of love over the wire, for he was a telegraph operator. Experiences such as this one, which would be memorialized years later in the characters of Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza in his novel Love in the Time of Cholera, would come to play a major role in Garcia Marquez's writings.

Most of the time, however, Tranquilina's influence was felt in her telling of folk stories, for which she was an inexhaustible reservoir. For example, in one tale Garcia Marquez recalls hearing of an old woman named "Green Mama" on whose land was buried a treasure a local character came

to unearth. However, when this local hero went out in search of the treasure, he found himself beset upon by strange animals, "winged quadrupeds with the heads of birds, and curlews of metallic and resplendent plumage" (Bell-Villada 22-3). Characters like these "winged quadrupeds"--who bear a suspicious resemblance to the main character of Garcia Marquez's "An Old Man with Enormous Wings"--would years later serve as foundational elements for his novels, short stories and columns.

Aside from the subject matter of her tales, Tranquilina's second major contribution to her grandson's writing, her unique delivery, would also have a great effect upon Garcia Marquez's literature. What was important about her narration of these folk tales was her manner of telling "amazing stories with a straight face," and talking about people "without distinguishing between the quick and the dead" (Bell-Villada 43). The objectivity of her sketches and the unprejudicial nature of her delivery, which left room for what were often times a number of contradictory realities, would play a paramount role in the development of the magic realism Garcia Marquez would later develop in his literature.

In addition to the role his roots in Latin American folklore have played in developing his style and message, the impact of the turbulent and excessively violent political climate from which he writes cannot be

overestimated. In order to understand the extent to which this social unrest plays into the lives of Latin Americans, I will briefly diagram the political instability which has plagued Colombia since its colonization in the sixteenth century. Although I would never contend that the details of Colombia's history and their impact on its people can be generally applied to any Latin American culture, for my intents and purposes, "The problems common to the South American continent characterize Colombia today" (McNerney 6). This generalization is also supported by Alejo Carpentier, who offered:

> The conquest took a similar form throughout the continent and colonial societies developed simultaneously. The same ballads spread everywhere. Having passed from mouth to mouth the length and breadth of these lands, the same folk songs can today be heard almost without variation in Mexico, Venezuela, or Chile. (106)

I chose to focus on Colombia for the sake of manageability, and because the roots of the folklore and traditions Garcia Marquez was raised on sprout directly from its history.

The inhabitants of Colombia indigenous to the area can be divided into two groups, each with their own, relatively distinct, culture: the Caribs lived along the coast, and the Chibchas and Quechuas amid the interior. The first colonists, the Spaniards, came in 1500 (McNerney 4). The "discovery" of Colombia began along the Caribbean coast, and Christopher Colombus himself happened upon the Magdalene River--a central waterway honored in Garcia Marquez's Love

in the Time of Cholera--during his fourth voyage (Bell-Villada 18). From these modest beginnings emerged the first continuous Spanish settlement in Cartajena in 1533. Two centuries of intrusion into the interior of Colombia would come to follow as the Spaniards diffused the influence of colonization throughout the country.[1]

The Spanish colonization of Colombia delivered the initial tremors of political turbulence which would resound for centuries to come. To understand the impact of colonialism, one first needs to grasp the ideology which propagates it. The rationale of the colonists--whether their work was in Latin America, Africa, or elsewhere--is fairly consistent, and can be investigated through Edward Said's Orientalism.

The aspect of Said's study of the colonial ideology I wish to focus on revolves around Arthur James Balfour, particularly this long-time member of Parliament's response to the question: "What right have you to take up these airs of superiority with regard to people whom you choose to call Oriental?" (Said 31). Balfour's response, that England was "rescuing" Egypt "from the lowest pitch of social and economic degradation" (35), Said sees as indicative of the most pervasive and destructive belief behind colonialism. This defense implies an understanding of the "subject" country's values and goals, and,

> To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And

> authority here means for 'us' to deny autonomy to 'it'--the Oriental country--since we know it and it exists, in a sense, as we know it. (32)

Through this ideology, it becomes not only possible but even comfortable for the colonists to believe they are free to employ the means necessary for removing the colonized out from their relative squalor.

Once the colonists begin to feel as if they can "understand" the peoples of a "subject" country to the extent that the colonists' values can be imposed upon the subjects, the subjects become trapped within a "framework" which perpetuates their alleged subordinancy. The elements of their culture which are not moving in line with those of the colonists' are seen as antiquated, or outmoded. As Said explains, the subject country's

> great moments were in the past; they are useful in the modern world only because the powerful and up-to-date empires have effectively brought them out of the wretchedness of their decline and turned them into rehabilitated residents of productive colonies. (35)

And thus, the peoples of the colonized country are left long after the colonists have returned to their respective countries with a duality in their lives which is crippling to their respective identities. The lives of the colonized are plagued by the juxtaposition of their indigenous traditions with the Western pieces of machinery and frameworks, which leave no room for the colonized peoples' "primitive" ways. As I will explain later, the accurate representation of this duality in the lives of Latin

Americans would become in the twentieth century the chief function of magic realism in Latin American literature.

Colombia's systematic destruction continued throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and into the eighteenth century, when the first pulses of revolution could be felt. In 1810, Colombia gained its technical independence amid the still-smoldering wreckage of colonialism. A chaotic century of civil wars followed Colombia's independence, all of which culminated in the excessively destructive War of One Thousand Days. This war, which in itself claimed over 100,000 lives, ground to a halt in 1903 and contributed to the country's ultimate loss of Panama (McNerney 5).

Spain, however, is not the only country whose weight Colombia has suffered in its past. Twice in this century Colombia has been the victim of U.S. imperialism. The first instance of this was the United States' annexation of what is now the Republic of Panama, which had until that time been Colombia's northernmost province. When it looked as if canal talks were not going proceeding to plan, Theodore Roosevelt planted a seed in Colombia from which sprung a separatist political movement with ideas more consistent with U.S. demands (Bell-Villada 31). What ultimately transpired, as Gene Bell-Villada writes in his biographical study, Garcia Marquez, is that Colombia soon joined Mexico as being "the other Latin American republic to have seen its territory sizably diminished by U.S. power" (31).

The second instance has to do with the U.S.'s United Fruit Company, which was established in 1900. Through the United Fruit Company, the U.S. had created a virtual "state-within-a-state" in Colombia's coastal north (32). In contrast to the relative primitivity of Colombia's technology, the United Fruit Company owned its own railroad, irrigation canals, and functional telegraph system. The company was notorious for its harsh labor policies, and the consequent friction resulted in the 1928 general strike by thirty-two thousand field workers. This insurrection met terrible and bloody resistance at the hands of the Colombian military, which, "evidence suggests, were in the pay of United Fruit" (32). Among other things, these two instances of the United States' colonial activities in Colombia illustrate the tragic pervasiveness of the type of ideology Said examined in his work.

The political and social chaos which resulted from centuries of colonialism and imperialism reached its zenith during Garcia Marquez's lifetime, during a period now referred to as "la violencia" (Gale Research Stine 146). This era would last, roughly, from 1946 to 1965, "affect half the land surface of the country, and take up to two hundred thousand lives, mostly in rural areas" (Bell-Villada 24). Although the history of la violencia is too complex to adequately account for here, the aspect of it I would like to illuminate is the inescapable presence of violence during

the era, and the devastating effect it had on the country's people.

The assassination of Liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitan in 1948 is generally considered to be the starting point, if not for the era altogether, for at least the virtual orgy of violence which ensued directly thereafter (McNerney 5). Bell-Villada describes the period as one when

> political emotions now took their ugliest possible turn. Violent hatred quickly became a normal component of rural interparty strife. Assassinations and armed clashes were to be routinely climaxed by decapitations and castrations, drawings and quarterings, with pregnant women and whole families hacked to pieces. (26)

The carnage was beginning to diminish by 1957 with the formation of the National Front and the subsidence of interparty strife. However, the circumstances which prompted la Violencia in the beginning--poverty, unemployment, factioning--remained unresolved by this "frustrated social revolution" (28).

It was during this period of la violencia that Gabriel Garcia Marquez came of age as first a journalist, and later as writer of fiction. His writings are so saturated by the terrible violence which perpetually envelopes, at least to some degree, all of Latin America, that at times it risks being overlooked or downplayed. For example, although a novel like Love in the Time of Cholera may not appear to be overtly political, Paul Bailey observes that "the background to this novel is one of constant ferment" (29). Similarly,

Salman Rushdie notes that nearly all of Garcia Marquez's works, while they may be "about" any number of things, begin with death or some violent cataclysm of some kind (3). The impact the political and social unrest of the area has made on Garcia Marquez cannot be overestimated, and it has undoubtedly played a pivotal role in shaping the staunch political convictions which are so inseparable from the author's writing and use of magic realism.

Alejo Carpentier once made the observation that, "From the wars of independence onwards, Latin American life has revolved around political events. America, our America, is a political continent" (103). He followed this with his conclusion that, because of all this, "The history of Latin America weighs heavily on the present-day Latin American; much more than Europe's upon the European" (103). The impact of the political on the lives of Latin Americans is inescapable, but in Garcia Marquez we have an individual who embraces the political life in a variety of its applications. While he may be most renowned for his work in literature, the written word is too confining a medium to have contained all of his political energies. By investigating Garcia Marquez's non-literary, albeit political, life, one can attain a fuller understanding of the extent to which his life is embroiled within the political, for, as Joseph Epstein once noted, "Outside of his politics, Garcia Marquez's stories and novels have no

moral center; they inhabit no moral universe" (65).

Selden Rodman offers us an overview of Garcia Marquez as a political man in his article "Triumph of the Artist." "A typical Latin America liberal," Rodman writes,

> the public man supports all Leftist causes, while shying away from justifying the Soviet Union's domestic atrocities and its more barefaced sandbagging of its weak neighbors. He hates Augusto Pinochet and reveres the memory of Salvador Allende, regardless of what Allende did in Chile during his reign. (16-7)

In addition, Garcia Marquez's enthusiastic support of the 1959 Cuban Revolution is well documented (McNerney 9). Garcia Marquez's convictions and interest in the political realm of Latin America have been so strong as to jeopardize his career--assuming it could ever be separated from his personal life--as an author. For instance, following the publication of his novel, Autumn of the Patriarch, Garcia Marquez made the promise "not to publish any new fiction until the Pinochet regime of Chile was either disbanded or overthrown" (Rushdie 3). An example such as this one demonstrates how it is relatively impossible to separate Garcia Marquez's political contributions to the situations in Latin America into literary and non-literary categories since, for him, the two are indivisible.

Garcia Marquez's participation in political events and activities is also well known. For instance, Bell-Villada notes how active a role Garcia Marquez played in the Bertrand Russell Tribunal hearings on South American

dictatorships, as well as the time he spent working with President Omar Torrijos of Panama in his attempt to bring the canal and its adjoining areas back under Panamanian sovereignty (58). In addition, in 1986 Garcia Marquez addressed the "Group of Six"--which contained representatives from Sweden, Greece, India, Mexico, Argentina, and Tanzania--on the potential horror and destruction of nuclear war (Bell-Villada 58).

Realizing that his local and international fame have created opportunities for him unavailable to common citizens, Garcia Marquez has on occasion taken advantage of this position by asking favors of friends within the political realm. For example, Garcia Marquez's most widely publicized friend and ally has been Fidel Castro, over whom he has at times exercised his unique influence to obtain the release of political prisoners. Other times, Garcia Marquez has served as a facilitator between the Colombian government and various guerilla factions. Besides his contact with Castro, Garcia Marquez has also been known to use other contacts he has to aid in the Sandanista's fight against the tyranny of the Samoza regime up until their victory in 1979 (58).

Although Garcia Marquez's literary political activities are his most widely known on an international scale, his renown is often times confined to his works of fiction. While he is not nearly so well known for it internationally,

Garcia Marquez is still very active politically through journalism--a practice which he doesn't see as very far removed from writing fiction: "Without being fiction, it is a form, an instrument for expressing reality" (Garcia Marquez Interview 23). The predominance of his articles have appeared in the periodical Alternativa, a magazine based in Bogota which he helped to establish and fund in 1974. The topics he has approached have varied as widely as reporting on the final struggles of President Allende in Chile, to the liberation of Angola from the Portuguese, to the scene in postwar Vietnam (Bell-Villada 59). Garcia Marquez sought to continue the funding of alternate sources of information with his proposal to start up a newspaper, El Otro, with the money he received for his Nobel Prize in 1982. Unfortunately, due to competition and financial difficulties, his project was never able to get off the ground (McNerney 14).

Garcia Marquez's contributions to the social and political srealms in Latin America are, as one can see, as varied as they are numerous, but how does this impact his feelings on his role as a writer of fiction in Latin America? It would seem what Garcia Marquez fears the most is falling into the rut of political writing which he terms as "critical realist" efforts, or works of propaganda, which "nobody reads and never overthrew any tyrants," anyway (Bell-Villada 9). Instead, he comments in an interview

that, "in reality the duty of the writer--the revolutionary duty, if you like--is that of writing well" (Pynchon 1, 47). The three areas Garcia Marquez concentrates on fulfilling as a writer and consequent public figure, as McNerney lists, are:

> first, the writing of good literature, not necessarily what would be termed social literature; second, the type of journalism that exposes the horrors and injustices in Latin America and keeps them present in our collective consciousness; and third, a sort of underground diplomacy he finds himself in a unique and ideal position to practice. (13)

For the remainder of the chapter, I will concentrate on how these three areas--particularly the first two--are generally manifest in the collective "socialist" works of Garcia Marquez.

As I have attempted to illustrate, identity for Latin Americans has become problematized following colonization by what Kumkum Sangari refers to in her article, "The Politics of the Possible," as "The simultaneity of the heterogeneous" (158). While violence is no doubt a symptom of this problem, it alone is not responsible for the dilemmas Latin Americans face in reassessing identity. Simultaneity is a historical product "of a long history of miscegation, assimilation, and syncretization as well as conflict, contradiction, and cultural violence" (Sangari 158), and is manifest in the duality I referred to earlier, ubiquitous in Latin America.

In her article, Sangari explains why Latin American

culture is incapable of completely assimilating Western culture. First, the Latin American cultures and the Western cultures are in many ways antithetical; "in a contradictory way it [Western culture and "progress"] is both something that is owned as well as something to be resisted" (Sangari 159). Secondly, the Latin American cultures perpetuate their role as the subordinate by accepting Western "material development that, contrary to the unidirectional laws of 'progress,' enforces the coexistence of primitive agriculture with advanced technology and export economics" (159). From this simultaneity emerge "problems of meaning and representation," since what is "real" or "valid" to one, is many times not to the other (161).

Because the two cultures have come in contact and the realities of one have mingled with those of another, there are bound to be elements of Western culture which have been absorbed by the Latin American cultures. However, there are many elements, such as the instances Sangari referred to, which cannot coexist with a Latin American culture. Magic realism in these situations is an invaluable tool for depicting that which has not been assimilated, but has rather led to the phenomenon of there being multiple realities coexisting within the same culture.

Garcia Marquez approaches the Latin American peoples' problem with identity by drawing their attention to, and increasing their awareness of, their own culture. To

achieve this end, Garcia Marquez does not feel he should need to reduce his writing strategies to the realms of mere shock tactics and propaganda. In an interview conducted by Marlise Simons, Garcia Marquez states: "I don't think literature should be used as a firearm . . . . I think my books have had political impact in Latin American identity; they help Latin Americans to become more aware of their own culture" (Garcia Marquez Interview 24). Garcia Marquez goes on to explain how heightening awareness can be just as political as strict protest literature or pamphlets:

> The idea is to stimulate awareness . . . . People often think that politics are elections, that politics are what governments do. But literature, cinema, painting and music are all essential to forging Latin America's identity. And that's what I mean by politics. (Garcia Marquez Interview 24)

Although one could argue that Garcia Marquez risks compromising the full impact of his message amidst the sheer beauty of his prose, his subtle strategies have led many, such as Fidel Castro, to refer to him as "the most powerful man in Latin America" (Epstein 60-1).

For Garcia Marquez, heightening awareness entails representing reality through literature in as realistic terms as possible, no matter how fantastic they may seem to be. Although much of Garcia Marquez's work is categorized as "magical" realism, it would be closer to the truth to label it as "political realism" as Joseph Epstein does in his article, "How Good is Gabriel Garcia Marquez?" (64). As

Garcia Marquez sees it, the fantastic elements are not so much a creation as an interpretation of the reality of Latin America: "It is merely the reality of Latin America, which he has faithfully transcribed in more or less the same way that he might write about it in, say, an ordinary article written for a daily newspaper" (Buford 965). For Garcia Marquez, magic realism, with its function of objectively positing conflicting realities, is the literary strategy which most accurately represents the duality of Latin America.

This, I feel, is why Garcia Marquez employs magic realism--sometimes referred to as "marvelous" realism--in his literature: it gives Latin American folk culture the same degree of validity as Western science and rationality (Spindler 82). Initially, magic realism was a term from the 1920's describing the work of German painters, and had less to do with fantasy than with uncovering "the mystery hidden in ordinary objects and everyday reality" (75). However, upon the publication of Alejo Carpentier's El reino de este mundo in 1949, the term came to signify the presentation of "two contrasting views of the world (one rational, modern and discursive; the other magical, traditional and intuitive) as if they were not contradictory" (76). Magic realism confuses the reader's notions of "reality" by depicting reality as an historical construct, and thus being open to interpretation and change (Sangari 163).

In this sense, magic realism for Garcia Marquez is a metafictional strategy which aids Latin Americans in liberating themselves from identities trapped within the "dominating frameworks" of the West (Said 40). According to Patricia Waugh, metafiction enables readers "to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (2). It does this by demonstrating that "reality" is framed by the individual, and that it is only a provisional organization of experience (Waugh 30). Garcia Marquez's use of magic realism as a type of metafiction--for these strategies can hardly be separated in his work--empowers Latin Americans by revealing Western "reality" as a relative, rather than a universal, historical construct, and thereby "legitimizes the status of the possible as valid knowledge" (Sangari 163).

What Garcia Marquez attempts to demonstrate to his readers--particularly those in Latin America--is that "established realism is neither the last word nor the sole means available to the progressive imagination and its assumptions and intuitions" (Bell-Villada 12). Garcia Marquez heightens the awareness of Latin Americans to how their identity has been, and continues to be formed, by utilizing a number of strategies in his literature revolving around magic realism and metafiction. For the remainder of my thesis, I intend to analyze three of Garcia Marquez's works--"The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World," "A Very

Old Man with Enormous Wings," and Love in the Time of Cholera--for how the author uses style and content to comment on the identity-shaping politics of Latin America.

CHAPTER 2: MAGIC REALISM AND ITS METAFICTIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TWO SHORT STORIES, "A VERY OLD MAN WITH ENORMOUS WINGS" AND "THE HANDSOMEST DROWNED MAN IN THE WORLD"

"The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" and "An Old Man with Enormous Wings" were both written by Gabriel Garcia Marquez in 1968, during the period now referred to as the "boom." I have included these stories together in the same chapter because I see them as approaching the elements which make Latin American identities problematic in a similar way. In both of the tales, a silent, foreign entity falls outside of a society's framework and finds itself helpless to their re-creation of its identity. In the former story, an unidentified foreigner washes to the shore of a remote village; in the latter, a winged man falls from the sky into the bewildered attentions of a community of isolated townspeople. Rooted in the fantastic, these two stories incorporate magic realism as a form of metafiction to illustrate the way in which Latin Americans, in reality, have had their identity problematized through colonialism.

Integral to colonialist ideology is the conviction that a Western perception of reality is a universal one--that the goals, values and perspectives of the West can be imposed upon the colonized, for they are the only rational goals, values and perspectives that are valid. Such a belief system stems from the colonists' limited exposure to

alternative cultures. The villagers of "An Old Man with Enormous Wings" suffer from a similar ethnocentricity. While Garcia Marquez never explicitly remarks on their limited experience of other cultures, he writes, "On the following day everyone knew that a flesh-and-blood angel was held captive in Pelayo's house" ("A Very Old Man" 204). This seems to indicate that the village had to have been small for word to have traveled so quickly. In addition, in describing the weather conditions over the rural village, the narrator notes, "The world had been sad since Tuesday" (203). For all intents and purposes, the "Sea and sky were a single ash-grey thing" over the entire known world. In referring to one's local weather conditions as if they were universally applicable to conditions elsewhere in the world, the villagers demonstrate a naive sense of ethnocentricity not unlike that which Said claims is intrinsic to the colonizers' ideologies.

Into their culturally-limited frames is thrust the winged man, a creature like none the villagers have previously encountered. Similar to the way in which the colonized, Latin American peoples reality failed to conform to Western standards, the fantastic element of the winged man cannot be accommodated by the villagers' ideological frames. Because they do not understand him, or are not willing to accept his fantastic identity, the villagers lock him into a chicken coop. Imprisoned, the winged man begins

to deteriorate to an even greater degree than he had before: "He could scarcely eat and his antiquarian eyes had also become so foggy that he went about bumping into posts. All he had left were the bare cannulae of his last feathers" (209). The chicken coop can be seen as a metaphor for the villagers' constraining ideological frames, too narrow to accommodate the outstretched wings--and identity--of this strange being.

While the winged man rests within his cell, the villagers attempt to literally identify what this creature is. As I explained previously, the principal justification colonizers use is that they are capable of knowing this foreign creature, and thereby understanding what is best for it. Said identifies traces of this ideology in the thoughts of Lord Balfour:

> . . . supremacy in his mind is associated with 'our' knowledge of Egypt and not principally with military or economic power . . . . To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it . . . since we know it and it exists, in a sense, as we know it. (32)

Since it would be impossible for colonizers to have sufficient knowledge to understand a culture foreign to their own experience, the colonized identity is forced to conform to the incomplete and limited "definitions" the colonizers have determined for the colonized.

Just as knowledge of the colonized is critical for the colonizer, the villagers defer to local authorities in the matter of determining the identity of this foreign being.

In this story, there are two authorities. The first is the neighbor woman, "who knew everything about life and death" (Garcia Marquez "A Very Old Man" 204). According to her, the winged man is an angel. However, this hypothesis is stricken by their second authority, the parish priest. Both of their opinions are grounded in the Christian mythology which imposed religious ideology upon the colonized. The priest, however, can see through this "angel's" disguise:

> The parish priest had his first suspicion of an imposter when he saw that he did not understand the language of God or know how to greet His ministers. Then he noticed that seen close up he was much too human: he had an unbearable smell of the outdoors, the back side of his wings were strewn with parasites and his main feathers had been mistreated by terrestrial winds, and nothing about him measured up to the dignity of angels. (205)

Neither the authorities nor the rest of the villagers are able to reach a consensus on the identity of the winged man, but it is important that he remain identity-less until they can determine a suitable one for him.

What Garcia Marquez does to draw attention to the subject's lack of power in determining his own identity is have him speak a language the villagers find incomprehensible. To the villagers the angel is incapable of uttering anything but nonsense, and they have no time for attempting to comprehend the winged man's attempts to identify himself. Again, the villagers are in a similar position as Lord Balfour had been in. Said writes that if Balfour "does not speak directly for the Orientals, it is

because they after all speak another language; yet he knows how they feel since he knows their history, their reliance upon such as he, and their expectations" (34). The people of Latin America prior to colonization preserved their history through an oral tradition and, by rendering them speechless, the colonizers effectively discontinued their history and identity (Subbarao)--just as the villagers sever the winged man from his prior identity.

Another interesting point in a similar vein to the winged man's inability to communicate vocally is that he is also rendered immobile by the chicken coop and the damage it does to his body, and is thus incapable of fleeing from his situation. In this way Garcia Marquez applies magic realism to parallel the predicament of the winged man with that of the colonized. Similar to the winged man, the people of Latin America were unable to escape their fate, for the impact of colonialism had spread throughout the various cultures of Latin America. Unable to escape and rendered powerless to speak for themselves, the people of Latin America--like the winged man--are forced into subordination by the colonizers.

Said writes that, for the colonized,

> Their great moments were in the past; they are useful in the modern world only because the powerful and up-to-date empires have effectively brought them out of the wretchedness of their decline and turned them into rehabilitated residents of productive colonies. (35)

As the colonized people were seen by the colonizers as

subjects to be used, so also do the villagers see the winged man as a subject to be used. Garcia Marquez writes that the "simplest" of the villagers wanted to put the subject into a place of authority. However, others of a "sterner," more serious mind,

> felt that he should be promoted to the rank of five-star general in order to win all wars. Some visionaries hoped that he could be put to stud in order to implant on earth a race of winged wise men who could take charge of the universe. (Garcia Marquez "A Very Old Man" 205)

In all cases, the villagers are deciding not only the subject's identity, but also how he can benefit them. It is assumed that either the subject will cooperate willingly, or that he will be forced to cooperate until he comes to terms with the inevitable wisdom of the village's decision.

It follows that if the colonizers come to the colonized with the intent of making subjects out of them, they would be more "attracted" to a subject who already understood its role. Such a situation can be found in this tale as the villagers became frustrated with the mysterious winged man, and instead begin to take an interest in the spider-girl. The reason why they are drawn to her has to do with the "fearful lesson" she has to share (208). The spider-girl reveals to the villagers that she was transformed into the monstrosity before them due to her disobedience to an authority: her mother. Although her fantastic form defies their limited understanding, her demeanor is one of subordination, in stark contrast to the resiliency of the

"haughty angel" (208), and this provides them with a foothold conducive to their own ideology from which they can begin to form an identity for her.

In "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," magic realism enables Garcia Marquez to illustrate the duality of Latin American life in --as paradoxical as it may seem--as accurate terms as possible. Apart from concentrating on how a Latin American culture is a syncretic one, magic realism illustrates in unsettling, contrasting terms the ways in which the two cultures cannot coexist. For example, a culture built upon a foundation of local folklore cannot simultaneously sustain an antithetical reality which places Western rationality over what it considers as being "fantastic." In the story, Garcia Marquez depicts this clash by calmly describing a situation in which the fantastic winged man unarguably exists in the "real" world. The strange, unresolved existence of these two realities and the objective voice through which this conflict is related both prompt the reader to question the meaning behind this juxtaposition.

As the reader questions what this meaning might be, he or she is trying to resolve the contradiction of there being two, equally valid realities. In this way, one can see how magic realism is used by Garcia Marquez as a metafictional strategy. For the colonizers, the identities of the Latin Americans failed to conform to the frameworks of Western

values and rationality. The identities of the Latin Americans seemed just as fantastical to the colonizers as the winged man's does for the villagers; it is impossible for the colonizers to see these "subjects" "functioning as 'human' beings" (Sangari 163). What Garcia Marquez illustrates is that, despite how fantastic they may seem, the reality of those foreign to us is autonomous. By placing the fantastical element of the winged man amongst the villagers, Garcia Marquez draws attention to how relative historically constructed frames are, and validates the identity of the subject to the same degree the villagers' identities are valid (Spindler 82).

The same problems illustrated in "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" dealing with the construction of identity and the "simultaneity of the heterogeneous" are also represented in "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World." Similar to "A Very Old Man," the villagers of "The Handsomest Drowned Man" see reality through frames which are a product of their limited experience. This is not to say that their culture is in any way less real or valid than any others, but the sum of their experience has in fact been limited to the cape and surrounding islands upon which they and their neighbors live (Garcia Marquez "The Handsomest" 231). Even to a greater degree than in the previous short story, Garcia Marquez has created in this tale an over exaggeratedly isolated environment: "The village was made up

of only twenty-odd wooden houses that had stone courtyards with no flowers and which were spread about on the end of a desertlike cape" (231). So remote was this village and its inhabitants, and so limited was their experience with the outside world that, "when they found the drowned man they simply had to look at one another to see that they were all there" (231).

The isolation of these villagers is important in understanding the framework around which they organize the experiences of their lives. A frame can only be as large as the sum of the experiences which it has been constructed to contain. All of the other, potential experiences which exist beyond the knowledge and reality of this "desertlike cape" are, at least temporarily, unfathomable and external to their frameworks. Thus, the imposition of an external entity into this limited frame necessarily applies stress upon the frame, and challenges the realities of those who had forged this construct.

Into the villagers' entrenched framework drifts "the tallest, strongest, most virile, and best built man they had ever seen" (231). What is significant is not that this drowned man occupies the "uppermost category" of men they have known, but that he is not even on their "scale;" literally, "there was no room for him in their imagination" (231). In the same way the villagers would later imagine this drowned man "condemned to going through doors sideways,

cracking his head on crossbeams" (233), Garcia Marquez paints this foreign entity as a being whose identity is literally too large to fit inside of these peoples' constrained frameworks (Faulkner).

Through his use of magic realism, Garcia Marquez has done an excellent job of creating an arena within which the metafictional question of the distinction between external and framed reality becomes painfully evident. Frederick Jameson, in "The Political Unconscious: Narratives as a Socially Symbolic Act," refers to this situation of integrating an autonomous, external reality into a framework:

> History . . . is not a text, for it is fundamentally non-narrative and non-representational; what can be added, however, is the proviso that history is inaccessible to us except in textual form, or in other words, that it can be appropriated by way of a prior (re)textualization. (81)

Building off of Jameson's point, "retextualization" of the alien drowned man is necessary in order for the villagers to make any judgements at all. But the retextualization the drowned man undergoes in this story carefully spares the villagers' frames the expense of the drowned man's autonomous reality.

In "The Handsomest Drowned Man," the autonomous, external reality of the drowned man is objectively alluded to as he washes ashore: " . . . only his shape gave one to suppose that it was the corpse of a human being, because the

skin was covered with a crust of mud and scales" (Garcia Marquez "The Handsomest" 231). The fact of the matter is that these villagers have never seen anything like this being who barely passes their standards for being human; he is much heavier and taller than the other men of the village (230). What ensues is not the re-textualization of this being, but his fantastic re-creation. Following his re-identification, he is no longer an anonymous humanoid form but has acquired the name Esteban, and all of the qualities which are intrinsically implied with this identity rooted in the villagers' frames.

The name "Esteban" has a set of implications which the villagers must have, at least unconsciously, shared. Now that they have "realized" his name was Esteban, they also knew how humble, selfless and gentle he must have been during his life. For instance, too big for their furniture, he no doubt would have remained standing when he would have come to visit, despite that "his heels [were] raw and his back roasted from having done the same things so many times whenever he paid a visit . . . just to avoid the embarrassment of breaking up the chair" (233). The creation of this "Esteban" had begun and, the more they thought about him, the more "the drowned man was becoming all the more Esteban for them . . ." (233).

Waugh offers some insight which may prove helpful in understanding the nature of using an established discourse

to represent an unidentifiable thing, such as the drowned man. Waugh writes,

> The more a text insists on a linguistic condition, the further it is removed from the everyday context of 'common sense' invoked by realistic fiction. Metafictional texts show that literary fiction can never imitate or 'represent' the world but always imitates or 'represents' the discourses which in turn construct that world. However, because the medium of all literary fiction is language, the 'alternative worlds' of fiction, as of any other universe of discourse, can never be totally autonomous. Their linguistic construction . . . always implicitly evokes the contexts of everyday life. (100)

In order for the villagers to have begun to understand the phenomenon of the drowned man, they necessarily need to see him in term of their discourse--in terms of themselves and their identity--which not only reflects but has created their frames.

It would be impossible for the autonomous reality of the drowned man to remain pristine through the "translation," but many times the frame too will shift in order to accommodate and, in a sense, "learn from" the new reality of this phenomenon. There will always be an adjustment but, in "The Handsomest Drowned Man," only the phenomenon is adjusted; the villagers' frames remain stable. When the drowned man floats to their shore and brushes his body, too large for their frames, up against their frameworks, the villagers evade the metafictional question Garcia Marquez has posited by metaphorically "compacting" his body to fit inside of their frames. Instead of allowing

him to offer themselves new and unheard of knowledge or possibilities by allowing his reality to coexist with theirs, the villagers accept him in terms of their own experience; instead of retaining his status as a stranger from an unidentified land, the villagers accept him as a champion of their own standards, and assimilate him. By seeing the drowned man in terms of their traditional standards, the villagers have no need to alter their entrenched frameworks. However, the price of this convenience is the exaggerated compromise the drowned man's autonomous reality is forced to undergo.

CHAPTER 3: MAGIC REALISM AND ITS METAFICTIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR LOVE IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA

Garcia Marquez wrote Love in the Time of Cholera in 1985--over fifteen years after the two short stories I covered--and it was the first work he published after being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982. In a way similar to his two short stories, Love in the Time of Cholera needs to be read as a Latin American text. If read as a work which was produced in a vacuum--or even in the West--it is still enjoyable, but the elements of magic realism and the metafictional questions it raises ring hollow. However, if one focuses on the development of Western genres of literature in Latin America in conjunction with its political climate, Love in the Time of Cholera becomes a significantly more complex and satisfying work.

The plot focuses on a love triangle where, after having her interest stray from the hopelessly romantic Florentino Ariza, Fermina Daza is married to a wealthy, upper-class doctor, Juvenal Urbino. After being rejected, Florentino patiently bides his time, waiting fifty-one years, nine months and four days to be reunited with his true love, Fermina. In her article, "A Prospective Post-Script: Apropos of Love in the Time of Cholera," Robin Fiddian notes that Garcia Marquez acknowledges having set out in this novel, "to write a nineteenth century novel as examples of

the type were written in the nineteenth century, as if it were actually written at that time" (192). Fiddian goes on to note that the genre Garcia Marquez seems to be imitating is the "folletines de amor," or "sentimental or lachrymose love stories" (193). The major elements Garcia Marquez imitates from these stories in his novel include the stereotypical characters--which includes how they physically and ideologically conform and fail to conform to the standards set by the folletin--and the romantic theme of the love triangle.

In the interview I was previously referring to, Garcia Marquez mentioned that he set out in Love in the Time of Cholera to parody what Fiddian interpreted as being the "folletines de amor," or "feuilleton" as they were known in France in the margins of early nineteenth century newspapers (Hamrick 75). In his article, "The New Czechoslovak Feuilleton--A Literary Genre Revived," William E. Harkins recounts the history of the feuilleton as a European, literary genre, and comments on its resurgence in Czechoslovakia during the political turmoil of the Prague Spring of 1968. Harkins writes that feuilletons were often written for the common person in a language that could "penetrate masks, posing and hypocrisy, that will restore a fundamentally human and humane basis to society and eliminate all that is false in human communication and social behavior" (53). Topics, although they varied, tended

to revolve around "the Czech national cause," but rather than expressing one's viewpoints in a propagandistic way, the author would often "search to find a basic spiritual common denominator" (Harkins 53). For the Czech writers, this common denominator was often the cycles of the seasons; for Garcia Marquez, the denominator was "love."

Just as in the two short stories, it is important to identify the conventional frames Garcia Marquez is using, in order to be able to identify what he is making a parody of. Evidence that Garcia Marquez is intentionally conforming his characters to the demands of this genre are plentiful. Florentino Ariza is the handsome poet who has lived his life in lower-class conditions with the steadfast contention that love is "a state of grace: not the means to anything but the alpha and the omega, an end in itself" (Garcia Marquez Love 293). Prior to meeting Fermina Daza,

> he was the most sought-after young man in his social circle, the one who knew how to dance the latest dances and recite sentimental poetry by heart, and who was always willing to play violin serenades to his friends' sweethearts. (54)

In Florentino Ariza, Garcia Marquez has created a character obsessed with fleeing from his Latin American world by assuming the stereotypical role of the European, romantic lover.

Upon meeting Fermina Daza, Florentino Ariza falls hopelessly in love. Florentino carries his stubborn quest for love to such extremes and becomes so overwhelmed by his

passion for the lovely Fermina that he resorts to "ingesting" love, giving "in to his desire to eat the gardenias that Transito Ariza grew in pots in the patio, so that he could know the taste of Fermina Daza" (65). Despite all he could say or do otherwise, Fermina rejects his love and Florentino, compelled to maintain his end of the love, finds himself in his old age having "not stopped thinking of her for a single moment since Fermina Daza had rejected him out of hand after a long and troubled love affair fifty-one years, nine months, and four days ago" (53). To maintain this love, Florentino takes a vow of celibacy and spends a lifetime reading and writing love poetry.

Although Florentino Ariza is not the only character in the novel who fulfills a conventional role, it is important to note that he is the only one who is obsessed with creating a world which bears as close a resemblance as possible to the worlds depicted in his romantic fantasies. In order to live his fantasies to the greatest extent possible, Fermino needs to populate his world with more romantic characters. Florentino Ariza twists and conforms whatever elements of the other characters he can to accommodate the roles he feels they need to fill. In this way, he bears a significant resemblance to the villagers of the short stories, who imposed identities upon the winged man and the drowned man in order to conform them to their own versions of reality.

Although Dr. Juvenal Urbino, unconsciously, falls far short of Florentino in living up to a romantic ideal, Florentino portrays him as a foil and adversary for the romantic hero which he himself embodies. Unlike Florentino who lives the turbulent life of the hopeless romantic, Urbino holds a professional career and lifestyle, dedicating his life to the humanitarian aim of comforting others in times of their illness. Besides sicknesses, Urbino is also here to save Latin America with what he has learned of high culture and rationality from Europe (Minta 730). In typical romantic fashion, he is a member of the town's upper class who unavoidably has "succumbed without resistance to the plebeian charms of Fermina Daza" (Garcia Marquez Love 105).

Fermina Daza, the object of both of these men's desires, is also portrayed as playing a highly conventional role, serving as the integral hypotenuse to this love triangle. Beautiful, shy and domestic, Fermina is the ultimate reward for any potential suitor. Realizing this, her father dissuades her from spending the rest of her life as a member of the working class, and does all he can to steer his daughter onto the path of Dr. Urbino. Through her marriage to Dr. Urbino, a member of the upper strata of society, Fermina Daza fulfills the every conventional wish and dream of lower-class females, for "No one ever thought that a marriage rooted in such foundations could have any reason not to be happy" (19). At the same time, she

provides Florentino with a tragic love interest for his own romantic character.

Throughout the novel, Florentino Ariza is often depicted as a man engrossed, pouring over his collection of romantic novels and love poetry:

> His only interest seemed to be the serialized love novels and the volumes of the Popular Library that his mother continued to buy for him and that he continued to read again and again, lying in his hammock, until he learned them by heart . . . . (148)

What is interesting about this is that Garcia Marquez has drawn his character, the romantic hero of his own folletin, observing the conventions of the folletin as they would appear in their most idealized form possible. What becomes obvious through this juxtaposition is how poorly Florentino and the other Latin American characters measure up to their roles. The framed reality of the folletin that Florentino, Fermina, and Urbino were trying to see themselves in, they find out, is impossible to live within. I argue that Garcia Marquez's portrayal of the contrasting realities existing alongside one another--this "simultaneity of the heterogenous"--is a product of magic realism. At the same time, by placing these two realities alongside one another as objectively as he does, Garcia Marquez uses magic realism to pose the metafictional dilemma about "the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh 2).

As the novel progresses, the three major characters all develop what is at first a tendency to deviate from the

romantic model established by the folletin, which quickly unravels until their lives bear little resemblance to the roles dictated by the folletin. Despite his efforts, Florentino cannot manage to keep the rest of the world within the framework he has tried to make it conform to. For Dr. Juvenal Urbino, love was never the primary reason behind his marriage to Fermina Daza. Rather,

> The truth is that Juvenal Urbino's suit had never been undertaken in the name of love, and it was curious, to say the least, that a militant Catholic like him would offer her only worldly goods: security, order, happiness, contagious numbers that, once they were added together, might resemble love, almost be love. But they were not love . . . . (Garcia Marquez Love 205)

For Urbino, Fermina was a status symbol; she was convenient and useful to have around. Fermina Daza soon realized this too, for, "She knew that he loved her above all else, more than anyone else in the world, but only for his own sake . . . (221). Although Urbino had never desired love in the romantic sense that the folletin perpetuated, he breaks from the framework imposed by the folletin by marrying the beautiful girl and living a content life, free of romantic love.

Fermina Daza had once been touched by love and entered the marriage to Urbino hoping this too would blossom into love but, "in any case, Fermina Daza's happy marriage lasted as long as the honeymoon" (206). Whereas her relationship with Florentino was one of more mutual affection, for Urbino she saw herself as "a deluxe servant" (221). Fermina goes

on to elaborate on the subordination she feels to Urbino: "She always felt as if her life had been lent to her by her husband: she was absolute monarch of a vast empire of happiness, which had been built by him and for him alone. . . . she was in his holy service (221). Fermina falls from the role Florentino and his folletines had established for her by accepting a life of convenience over one of love for, unlike Florentino, she was "not convinced that love was really what she needed to live" (205).

Florentino Ariza, too, eventually finds he cannot keep himself within the framework established by the folletin, but for slightly different reasons than either Fermina or Urbino couldn't. Fermina and Dr. Urbino's ideologies never neatly conformed to their roles within the folletin and, with time, neither could their bodies. Of these three major characters, only Florentino's belief and adherence to the powers of love persevere throughout the novel. But although he tries to hold fast to his ideals, he finds he physically cannot keep up with the dictates of the framework. For instance, when celibacy becomes too great of a burden for him to bear along with his longing for Fermina Daza, Florentino discovers "the cure for his misfortunes: his illusory love for Fermina Daza could be replaced by an earthly passion" (143). Not only does he break his vow of celibacy, but he does so six hundred and twenty-two times before he is reunited with Fermina.

In addition to this, with time Florentino succumbs to the physical fatigue and ailments which come with the years--namely, for him, baldness and chronic constipation. Whereas at one time he was the envy of the neighborhood girls, the protagonist of Garcia Marquez's folletin now has "combed the last tufts of his hair at his temples upward and plastered them with brilliantine to the middle of his shining skull as a solution to total baldness" and come to depend on regular enemas (48). For all three of the novel's major characters there are standards to meet, as well as glaring incidents where they fall short of these expectations.

As a metafictional strategy, Garcia Marquez's use of magic realism enables the reader to explore the possibilities of there simultaneously existing alternate ordering schemes for depicting the external world. In her book, Metafiction, Patricia Waugh explains how metafiction allows individuals to see they "occupy 'roles' rather than 'selves'" (3)--that their reality is more a subjective construction than a static Identity. With this in mind, the magic realism of Love in the Time of Cholera works particularly well as a metafictional agent. In the novel, the two conflicting worlds exist because Florentino Ariza has created a second reality, distinct from one which is commonly accepted as a "real" Latin American reality, which is inhabited by characters from the other reality who now

occupy different roles than they had in that reality.

Florentino Ariza's creation of an alternate reality so extreme it can't help but draw attention to itself, enables the reader to grasp the provisional nature of "reality." "Reality," in Love in the Time of Cholera, is exposed as being nothing more than a potential and valid organization of the external world (Waugh 30). Through Garcia Marquez's use of magic realism, one can observe that it is indeed possible, and actually unavoidable, for there to be multiple interpretations of reality coexisting. While the existence of alternate realities may be unavoidable, it would be careless of a reader to fail to examine the matter any further. Because we know something of the author's political convictions, one can speculate further into the possible statements Garcia Marquez may be making through his use of magic realism.

Salman Rushdie once remarked, "Nearly all of his [Garcia Marquez's] works begin with death or violence or destruction" (3). In "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," the tale begins in the midst of a cataclysmic storm, from the depths of which come marching an army of crabs. In Love in the Time of Cholera, "Decay is part of the landscape" (Franco 573). Garcia Marquez cleverly besets the people of his novel with "cholera," a word which, as Thomas Pynchon explains, is identical in the Spanish language to the word for "anger:"

> In their city, throughout a turbulent half-century, death has proliferated everywhere, both as el colera, the fatal disease that sweeps through in terrible intermittent epidemics, and as la colera, defined as choler or anger, which taken to its extreme becomes warfare. Victims of one, in this book, are more than once mistaken for victims of the other. (1, 47)

The social and political unrest of Latin America is inescapable and, if what Carpentier previously said about Latin Americans and their unavoidable deep, political awareness is true (Carpentier 103), it would take a truly fantastic and irresponsible imagination to allow a person to somehow escape this chaos.

An element which is magical and fantastic about this novel is that all the while the characters are beset by social and political chaos, they choose to live the lives of romantic European characters ambivalent to their surroundings. The roles these characters imitate are borrowed from European works of literature. However, as Sangari explains, meanings do not translate well between the "Third" and the "First" world; "the problems of meaning and representation that beset the 'Third World' are very different from the slippage of meaning and of the 'real' which currently confronts academic discourses of Europe and America" (161). In addition to this, Alejo Carpentier explains in an interview, "Our literature in Spanish and Portuguese is several centuries behind that of other romance languages" (99). What Garcia Marquez is making painfully evident--in a magical way not dissimilar to the way he

illustrated the clashing of two opposing cultures in his short stories--is that these Latin American people have confused their identities with some which were never designed for Latin American life, and are now virtually obsolete, anyway, even by European standards (Sanchez-Mora).

Garcia Marquez is making a comment through the use of magic realism, with its inherent metafictional implications, on how ill-suited the values and beliefs which the Latin Americans have had imposed upon them--and have imposed upon themselves--through colonialism and neocolonialism are for life in Latin America. As he is demonstrating, the European and the Latin American perspectives of reality are incapable of cooperating within the present social and political climate of Latin America. Magic realism in the novel raises metafictional questions when it illustrates the necessity of viewing reality as a subjective construction, and of realizing that the world is naturally comprised of a multiplicity of coexisting realities. However, magic realism is a unique tool because it not only allows Garcia Marquez to expose the coexistence of alternate realities, but it also demonstrates their incompatibility and the dangers of their coexistence. In this way, Love in the Time of Cholera uses magic realism to pose two alternate identities as ones which are coexistent, with the romantic, European one being an escape from the one which exists in a reality of poverty, tyranny, and desolation (Champlin 3).

While the fantastic elements of the novel may not be as explicit as they had been in the two short stories, the novel is no less fantastical in its rendering of the reality of Latin Americans straying from their own identities for the lure of a gilded, European one in spite the turmoil which remains unresolved in Latin America.

CONCLUSION

As I have reached the end of this project, I find that my research has opened up a number of avenues of study which, at the time, seemed to stray too far from the points I was trying to make. In retrospect, they would have probably fit well with the spirit of my paper. In this conclusion, I would like to gesture towards two paths of further investigation which could potentially elaborate on points which I wasn't able to develop fully given the aims I proposed for the thesis early in my paper.

In a project such as this, it is easy to lose sight of the text as a beautiful, aesthetically pleasing product when one is poring over it, scouring it for clues which might lead to insights of a more academic variety. Although common, a development such as this is a tragic one because, for the most part, the texts were probably chosen by the student in the beginning for their beauty and grace, rather than their social or political implications. Unfortunately for me, the beauty of Garcia Marquez's prose and the richness of his language inevitably took a back seat to the academic and political questions I pursued instead, as I wrongly understood the two as being mutually exclusive. One interesting route of further study could be pursued in examining the richness of Garcia Marquez's prose for the way in which it complicates and obscures the text's meaning.

After reading the two short stories and the novel I had selected, not to mention the many articles offering interpretations on the three, I came to realize that meaning within the stories is exceedingly difficult to pin down. It is not so much that one could read one of the works and feel completely at a loss for offering any sort of insight about the text, but rather that meaning seems to shift after three readings, then after five, and so on. Initially this was frustrating, for I constantly found myself feverishly amending my chapters so they could reflect what I had most recently determined was the most accurate, or valid, reading possible. In retrospect, my mindset didn't do either Garcia Marquez or the Latin American people the justice they deserve.

Allow me to elaborate. Until the final few weeks of the project, the drowned man of "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" always symbolized for me the colonized, who were having their identities re-constructed by the naive villagers. However, in the past few weeks it has occurred to me that Garcia Marquez might be using the drowned man to portray the initial wonder of the colonialists' presence, and that the villagers might be the colonized peoples, momentarily enchanted by this foreigner. During these last few weeks, it seemed to me that Garcia Marquez was using magic realism to depict how ridiculous the reality of the situation is when one culture comes to see their identity

invalidated by the inescapable "truth" of another's.

For the sake of brevity, I will only relate the predominant ideas behind my justification. What struck me in this story as different from "An Old Man with Enormous Wings" was how, although both the drowned man and the winged man are literally incapable of voicing their opinions on their own identity, the drowned man has no immediate need to convince the villagers of anything--they are awestruck by his presence. In fact, the villagers begin to fantasize about the ways in which their quality of living could be heightened by this fantastic stranger (Garcia Marquez "The Handsomest" 232). Before long, the villagers can't help but compare themselves to the drowned man, and they find their own physical beauty as being vastly inferior to this decomposing man's (232). Although they actually know nothing of this drowned man, in the end the only words they can use to describe him are one's such as "truth" and "sincerity," and they feel "ashamed" in his presence (235).

What it seemed to me Garcia Marquez was attempting to accomplish was to illustrate through magic realism the problems of neocolonialism. In his article, "The Economy of the Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," Abdul R JanMohamed categorizes the colonization of a country into two stages, the second of which he refers to as the "hegemonic" phase. This stage is dependent upon "the active and direct 'consent' of the

dominated," who must come to accept the colonizers' "entire system of values, attitudes, morality, institutions, and, more important, mode of production" (JanMohamed 62). In seeing the colonized people as "accepting" the physical presence and ideologies of the West, I am not insinuating they brought the havoc which historically followed upon themselves. Rather, Garcia Marquez is possibly using magic realism to demonstrate how preposterous it is that Latin Americans have had their identities troubled by the strange and new promises of the West, before they understood the truths behind them.

Although I will not go into any more examples of alternate interpretations of Garcia Marquez's texts, similar disputes could be made in every one of his works. In her article, "The Politics of the Possible," Kumkum Sangari offers some insight into the elusive quality of not only Garcia Marquez's texts, but also those of virtually all postcolonial writers. Sangari writes,

> . . . to maintain the text as enigma is also to maintain a resistance to being construed as an object of scrutiny. The enigma produces strain and anxiety in those who seek to inspect and understand it, and it rejects the instrumentality of Western 'sight;' it exercises power by sustaining insecurity and by openly refusing to surrender its 'meaning.' (171)

Although this passage was originally intended to describe Garcia Marquez's Chronicle of a Death Foretold, I believe it is relevant to the texts I have chosen to focus on. Sangari's explanation sees Garcia Marquez's fiction as

warding off the colonialist ideology which Said illustrated, for it offers the colonized peoples a means of resisting "being known" or "understood" by the colonial culture. The ambiguity of Garcia Marquez's texts, while it at first seemed a nuisance, now appears to be another strategy for distancing the Latin American people from the West, and it would be an extremely interesting starting point for further exploration of the subject I wrestled with.

A second avenue I find particularly interesting has to do with Frederic Jameson's article, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." In his article, Jameson asserts that,

> Third-world texts . . . necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society. (69)

While Jameson's argument may initially seem dismissible as being too sweeping of a generalization, it raises a few very interesting concerns. When he contends that all third-world texts must be national allegories, Jameson doesn't seem to be referring to something which is completely within the author's control. Instead, it would seem that Jameson is saying that the third-world environment, by definition, produces texts which cannot help but comment implicitly or explicitly on the social situation from which they are created. I find this intriguing because, among other reasons, it never occurred to me to consider an approach

other than an allegorical one in reading Garcia Marquez. Also, it seems that magic realism and allegory, as strategies, are antithetical to one another, in that one evades an unproblematic reading while the other avoids a more dynamic reading.

I leave you with these two potential approaches for elaborating on whatever progress I may have made on the topic through this thesis. The two avenues I have listed here are only the two which troubled me consistently throughout the project, and thus I have a vested interest of sorts in the findings any research of these routes might reveal. Hopefully my project has raised more questions than these two alone, for I firmly believe the topics of postcolonial literature and the politics of identity construction in Latin America to be extraordinarily complex ones which still allow so much room for work. I greatly encourage anyone whose interest may even have been only slightly piqued by this thesis to explore the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, as well as other Latin American writers. For myself, I can say this learning experience has been an invaluable one.

1. My treatment of the colonization of Colombia is admittedly broad and has been generalized in order to avoid straying too far from the points I plan to eventually raise. For a more complete account of the history of Colombia's colonization, the following two sources may prove helpful: Gene H. Bell-Villada, Garcia Marquez (Chapel Hill: U of NC P, 1990) 16-21. Kathleen McNerney, Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Columbia, SC: U of SC P, 1989) 3-5.

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